

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 2 and 4-15 are pending in this application. Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that claims 6-13 contain allowable subject matter.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 4-7, 9 and 13-15 are amended, claim 3 is canceled, and claims 16-18 are added.

In particular, claims 6 and 7 are rewritten into independent form to place claims 6-13 in condition for allowance. New claims 16 and 17 are added to depend from claim 6 and to recite the subject matter similar to that recited in claims 4 and 5, respectively.

Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in claim 3 and for better clarity (see the specification at, for example, Fig. 6 and paragraphs 0063 and 0064). Claim 3 is canceled, and claims 4 and 5 are amended to depend from claim 1.

Claim 9 is amended to broaden its scope by deleting a limitation. New claim 18 is added to depend from claim 9 and to recite the subject matter deleted from claim 9.

Claims 13-15 are amended to change "cap" to "plug" for better clarity (see the specification at, for example, paragraph 0035). Claims 14 and 15 are also amended to change their dependency.

Applicants thank Examiner Bui for the courtesy extended to Applicants' representative, Mr. Luo, during the December 7, 2005 personal interview. The substance of the personal interview is incorporated in the following remarks.

Reconsideration in light of the foregoing claim amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 14 and 15 are amended to obviate informalities. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over JP-A-61-141560 by Kyuhachiro Iwasaki ("Kyuhachiro"), or over JP-A-07-089086 by Isao Ebisawa ("Isao"); and rejects claims 3-5, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kyuhachiro or Isao in view of JP-A-11-129489 by Hikari Kaga ("Hikari"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in claim 3. Claim 1 is also amended for better clarity, as Examiner Bui suggested during the personal interview. As amended, claim 1 recites, among others, a flexible ink bag that contains a mass of ink such that a portion of a passage between a closure member and the interior space of an ink bag is not filled with the ink, and is charged with inert gas. An advantage of this recited feature is described in the specification at, for example, paragraph 14.

As discussed during the personal interview, Kyuhachiro, Isao and Hikari do not disclose or suggest such a flexible ink bag, or the advantage thereof. For example, Hikari does not disclose or suggest a flexible ink bag that contains a mass of ink such that the passage is not filled with the ink, and is charged with inert gas.

For at least the above reason, Kyuhachiro, Isao and Hikari, either individually or in combination, do not disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in claim 1, and claims 2, 4, 5, 14 and 15 depending therefrom. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) or §103(a) is respectfully requested.

New claims 16-18 are patentably at least in view of the patentability of claims 6 and 7, from which they respectively depend, as well as for additional features they recite.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 2 and 4-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment: Petition for Extension of Time

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